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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MOSCOW 000473

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [EU](#) [RS](#)  
SUBJECT: EU TROIKA TO RUSSIA

Classified By: Political MC Alice G. Wells for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

Summary

1. (C) During the Russia-EU Troika dialogue on February 11, Lavrov charged that Georgian troops were massing on the boundaries with South Ossetia and Abkhazia. The MFA later called the EU's reports dismissing these claims as a "snapshot" that did not measure "true" Georgian intentions. Lavrov justified the presence of Russian troops in the two break-away territories as necessary to hold back Georgian forces. Lavrov failed to convince the Troika members that Medvedev's proposed European Security Treaty was an "unstoppable train," but declared the GOR's readiness to discuss the proposal at the OSCE and the NRC. Despite earlier criticism, Russia only sought information on the European Partnership Initiative and did not seek to attend the proposed May summit in Prague. The GOR offered to conclude a framework agreement with the EU on crisis management that would more easily permit the GOR to deploy forces in support of EU missions. End summary.

Off the Agenda

2. (C) The Russia-EU Troika meetings in Moscow on February 11 were a mix of Russian bluster and cooperation, but diverged from the planned agenda. Trade and the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement negotiations did not figure prominently in the meeting, as they had been addressed by the European Commission and President Barroso during their visit to Moscow on February 6 (septel).

Georgia on my mind, Lavrov

3. (C) FM Lavrov reportedly took charge of the meeting and used it to go on the offensive regarding Georgia. He said that Russia was very concerned with reports that "Georgian special forces" were massing at the border without clear intentions and in violation of existing agreements. The GOR was also disappointed with the lack of EU monitors' reports and efforts to liaise with Russian forces. The Russian Foreign Minister justified the presence of Russian forces, saying that they were there to protect people and now needed to remain in order to hold back Georgian forces. In a meeting with us February 24, the MFA's Head of the EU Unit Petr Plikhin called the EU Monitors' reports which dismissed Russian charges that Georgian forces were massing on the boundaries with South Ossetia and Abkhazia as inconclusive and a "snapshot" of the situation that did not measure "true" Georgian intentions.

European Security Treaty (EST)

4. (C) On the EST, Lavrov likened it to an "unstoppable train," arguing that the proposal had momentum. In addition to DFM Grushko's presentation at the joint PC-FSC February

18, Russia was prepared to address the issue at the OSCE's Annual Security Review Conference, at a proposed special summit under the Kazakh Chairmanship of the OSCE in 2010, and at the NRC. Lavrov was reported to say that dialogue at these multilateral fora would be complimented by bilateral meetings and consultation with European countries, the U.S., and Canada, (Note: Swedish Director General Bjorn Lyrvall told the Ambassador that Lavrov said that Russia was already in consultations with the U.S. on the EST.) Lavrov wanted to put aside concerns raised at the recent Munich Security Conference that the EST would undermine the Helsinki Final Act and was quoted to say that this "was not a Helsinki II but a Helsinki plus."

#### Eastern Partnership Initiative (EPI)

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15. (C) The EU's Troika was prepared for a spirited discussion of its EPI, but found the GOR to be less negative than expected. Lavrov did not request observer status for Russia at the proposed May summit in Prague, but reportedly probed into the concept. He underlined that the EPI should not come at the expense of relations between Russia and partner countries. Plikhin elaborated that the GOR was eager to understand the proposal and the extent to which the initiative was open for others, including Russia, to participate.

#### Crisis Management

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16. (C) Lavrov praised the deployment of Russian helicopters

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and crews to support the EU's mission to Chad and the Central African Republic, and proposed that the EU and Russia draft a framework agreement that would allow for the quick deployment of Russian assets in support of other EU missions. The MFA's Plikhin denied the reports of EU diplomats that Russia offered to train additional Afghan police officers at its own expense. The GOR also showed an interest in coordinating anti-piracy efforts with the EU, with Lavrov saying that it preferred working with the EU rather than under a NATO umbrella.

#### Comment

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17. (C) By pushing hard on Georgia and thereby seizing the agenda of the meeting, Lavrov put the EU's Troika off-balance -- a tactic that continued with Russia offering deepened cooperation on EU missions and foregoing the opportunity to pounce on the EPI. GOR efforts to convince interlocutors that the EST had momentum and should rise to the level of a ministerial discussion fell flat when participants compared notes with us and others who Lavrov claimed were ready to work with Russia on the EST.  
BEYRLE